

Message Text

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71L

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0892

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 3900

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, SHUM, NU

SUBJECT: FMS TRANSACTIONS WITH GON: M-16'S AND M-60'S

REF: (A) MANAGUA 3794 (B) STATE 189779 (C) STATE 251114

(D) MANAGUA 3798

1. EMBASSY HAS TAKEN NOTE OF THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION IN REFTEL CONCERNING THE DEFERRAL AND FINAL APPROVAL OF SALE OF M-16 RIFLES AND M-60 MACHINE GUNS TO NICARAGUA.

2. EMBASSY WISHES TO POINT OUT THAT AMBASSADOR HAS MADE TWO STRONG DEMARCHES TO PRESIDENT SOMOZA ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE SINCE JULY 21. ALTHOUGH, AS INDICATED REFTEL (D), SOMOZA DID NOT SEEM TO BE ON TOP OF ISSUE NOR DID HE COMMIT HIMSELF TO TAKE ANY AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ON THE QUESTION, IT IS WORTHY OF NOTE THAT THE ENTIRE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAS BEEN QUIESCENT HERE RECENTLY. IN PAST SEVERAL WEEKS NO REPORTS OR COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN FORTHCOMING NOR HAS THE EMBASSY RECEIVED EITHER CORRESPONDENCE OR VISITORS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. THIS COULD INDICATE AN EASING OFF OF REPRESENTATIVE MEASURES BY THE GON OR IT COULD BE MERELY COINCIDENTAL. THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THE MESSAGE OF OUR CONCERN HAS BEEN RECEIVED BY THE GON. YESTERDAY'S (AUGUST 17) NOVEDADES, THE PRO-GOVERNMENT DAILY, PUBLISHED THE ENTIRE TEXT IN SPANISH OF TIME MAGAZINE'S AUGUST 16 COVER STORY ON "TORTURE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF STATE POLICY".

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3. WITH REFERENCE TO THE ABOVE-MENTIONED DEMARCHES TO PRESIDENT

SOMOZA, IT MUST BE RECOGNIZED THAT THERE ARE STRICTLY CIRCUM-
SCRIBED LIMITS TO DIPLOMATIC PRESSURES DESIGNED TO CHANGE INTER-
NAL POLICIES OF SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS OR OTHER
ISSUES. OUR JUDGMENT IS THAT FURTHER DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE AT THIS
TIME (I.E., PROLONGED DELAY IN APPROVING FMS TRANSACTIONS FOR
THE MAJOR PART OF THE DESIRED WEAPONRY) WILL PROVE COUNTER-
PRODUCTIVE. THE RESULT WILL LIKELY BE: (A) GON PURCHASES OF
DESIRED ARMS SUPPLIES FROM BELGIUM, GERMANY, ISRAEL OR OTHER COUN-
TRIES; (B) A DECREASED RECEPTIVITY OF GON TO OUR POSITION ON HU-
MAN RIGHTS AND (C) A SERIOUS
WEAKENING OF OUR TRADITIONAL COOPER-
ATIVE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH NICARAGUA. NONE OF THESE PROBABLE
OUTCOMES IS IN THE U.S. INTEREST.

4. FURTHERMORE, U.S. THREAT NOT TO SELL SMALL ARMS, SUCH AS M-16S
AND M-60 MACHINE GUNS, UNLESS GON ACCOMODATES ITS INTERNAL POLICIES
TO OUR LIKING IS AN EMPTY ONE, SINCE SOME 25-30 COUNTRIES AROUND
THE WORLD MANUFACTURE AND EXPORT THE DESIRED ARMS. IN THE PAST,
THE GON HAS PURCHASED BELGIUM 5-56 MM CAL. ASSAULT RIFLES AND
ISRAELE AGEVA AIRCRAFT, AND HAS ADEQUATE FUNDS TO MAKE THIRD
PARTY PURCHASES AT ANY TIME. LAST MONTH, THE GON DISCUSSED THE
PURCHASE OF MACHINE GUNS, ASSAULT RIFLES, GRENADE LAUNCHERS, AND
OTHER EQUIPMENT WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF HECKLER & KOCH, GMBH,
A GERMAN SUPPLIER. AN ISRAELI MILITARY SALES REPRESENTATIVE IS
CURRENTLY VISITING MANAGUA WITH REGARD TO A POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF
PORTABLE RADIOS. AS WE KNOW, U.S. EQUIPMENT USUALLY IS PREFERRED
BUT IS NOT INDISPENSABLE.

5. FINALLY, AS NOTED IN REFTTEL (A), PRESIDENT SOMOZA HAS BEEN
TOLD THAT DEPARTMENT HAS APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE SALE OF M-16S. IN
VIEW OF THIS FACT, A POSTURE OF PROLONGED DELAY IN APPROVAL OF
FMS TRANSACTIONS WILL BE INTERPRETED AS TANTAMOUNT TO A REJECTION
OF THAT REQUEST, AND WILL PLACE EXTREMELY SERIOUS AND UNNECESSARY
STRAIN ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS AND PUSH THE GON TO OTHER
COMPETITIVE SUPPLIERS. THIS IN TURN WILL WEAKEN THE CLOSE U.S.
MILGP-GN WORKING RELATIONS WHICH PUTS US IN A POSITION TO URGE
MODERATION ON THE GN AND THE GON IN THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY CAM-
PAIGN. OUR FUTURE LEVERAGE WOULD BE SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED IF WE
TAKE ACTION NOW TO PUNISH THE GON FOR ACTS THAT WE DISAPPROVE
WHILE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION STILL APPEARS TO BE LESS THAN
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